IV, 3. — THE « ARS PRÆDICANDI » ATTRIBUTED TO GROSSETESTE

S. Harrison Thomson, in his *The Writings of Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, 1235-1253,* attributed to Grosseteste a treatise on preaching, *Ars praedicandi,* which has survived in a single copy in Durham Cathedral MS A.III.12. Containing some of the earliest surviving copies of extracts from Grosseteste's works, this volume was presented to the church of Durham by Bertramus de Middleton, Prior of Durham, sometime before his death in 1258. Thomson suggested the dates 1225-1230 for the folios concerned and Richard W. Southern in his recently published work on Grosseteste, working from a broader range of considerations, agrees with these dates.[1] If their assessment is correct, the folios in this codex that are associated with Grosseteste would find their origin in the days of his Oxford lectureship and open to us something of his frame of mind and homiletical skill at that time.

The *Ars praedicandi* is to be found on fols. 83C-84D of this manuscript. It begins with the text *Cum appropinquasset Ihesus Iherico* (Luke 18:35) and ends: "Explicit ars praedicandi." When one examines this selection it quickly becomes evident that it contains parts of two separate works. The first is the conclusion of a sermon, the second a portion of a treatise on preaching. The sermon fragment opens with the text already cited and concludes with the ascription, "Sed non perteriti increpacione turbe clamemus ad eum et oculis cordis interiores illuminet ut possimus ipsum cum gaudium cernere, cui est honor, et cetera." The sermon fragment is unrelated in subject to the *Ars praedicandi* which follows immediately without a break and begins abruptly, "De militibus ait Iohannes." The treatise is divided into sections of scriptural quotations and injunctions that are deemed appropriate to certain groups of persons: *milites, oratores, principes terrarum, claustrales, sacerdotes, conjugales, viduas et nuptes,* and *virgines.* The similarity of this arrangement to that of the *Summa de arte praedicatoria* of Alanus de Insulis provoked a brief and fruitful search that verified the fact that this is, in fact, a portion of Alan's treatise.[2] This discovery relegates yet another of the treatises attributed to Grosseteste to the list of *spuria,* and should emphasize the need for caution as to the authenticity of the attribution of selections in this manuscript to Grosseteste. In fact, all single surviving manuscript copies of works attributed to Grosseteste on grounds of circumstantial evidence or supposition, even if ascribed, demand careful scrutiny before being accepted as authentic. This was certainly true of the treatise *De contemptu mundi,*[3] even though it was ascribed, and it is true as well of the supposed treatise *Ars praedicandi,* found only in this manuscript. The presence of excerpts from Augustine, Cassiodorus, Isidore of Seville, Bernard of Clairvaux, Gregory the Great, Anselm, John Chrysostom, Seneca and Boethius, as well as Alanus de Insulis, warn us that we may well find others. If portions of this manuscript

are copied from notes made by Grosseteste, as Sir Richard suggests, and one is inclined to agree, we might expect to find a wide variety of sources.

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Footnotes

1. S. Harrison Thomson, *The Writings of Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, 1235-1253*, Cambridge: University Press (1940) 14; Richard W. Southern, *Robert Grosseteste: The Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe*, Oxford: Clarendon (1986) 72-3
2. P.L. CCX, 186-195
3. Edward B. King, "The *De contemptu mundi* Attributed to Grosseteste," *Speculum* 58 (July, 1983) 724-6